

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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R 282145Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1451
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, GT, PN
SUBJ: GUATEMALA-PANAMA RELATIONS

SUMMARY. MEETING IN EL SALVADOR FOLLOWS SEVERAL WEEKS OF PUBLIC UNCERTAINTY IN GUATEMALA OVER STATUS OF GUATEMALAN-PANAMANIAN RELATIONS. PREMATURE STATEMENT BY GUATEMALA'S VICE PRESIDENT TO EFFECT THAT RELATIONS HAD ALREADY BEEN REESTABLISHED HAS CAUSED FOREIGN MINISTRY SOME AWKWARD MOMENTS. NEVERTHELESS, RENEWAL OF RELATIONS SEEMS CLOSE AT HAND. END SUMMARY.

1. WEEKEND PRESS REVEALED THAT GUATEMALA FONMIN CASTILLO VALDEZ AND HIS PANAMANIAN COUNTERPART ARE SCHEDULED TO MEET TODAY, AUGUST 28, IN SAN SALVADOR AT THE INVITATION OF PRESIDENT ROMERO TO EXPLORE REESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

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2. THIS SUBJECT BECAME MINOR CAUSE CELEBRE WHEN VICE PRESIDENT VILLAGRAN KRAMER TOLD REPORTERS DURING VISIT TO SAN JOSE EARLIER THIS MONTH THAT RELATIONS HAD ALREADY BEEN NORMALIZED. SINCE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD MADE NO SUCH REVELATION, LOCAL PRESS HAS BEEN CHIDING THE EXECUTIVE TO GET ITS ACT TOGETHER. FONMIN CASTILLO VALDEZ, RATHER THAN PERPETUATE UNSEEMLY JURISDICTIONAL FEUD IN PUBLIC WITH VICE PRESIDENT, HAS MAIN-

TAINED DISCREET IF SOMEWHAT EMBARRASSED SILENCE IN FACE OF REPEATED QUESTIONING BY MEDIA. AT SAME TIME, LOCAL PAPERS CARRIED WIRE SERVICE STATEMENT BY GENERAL TORRIJOS TO EFFECT THAT ONLY DETAILS NEEDED TO BE IRONED OUT.

3. THE EPISODE IS APPARENTLY A TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT. PRESIDENT LUCAS, SHORTLY AFTER HIS INAUGURATION, CONFIRMED HIS INTENTION TO RESTORE RELATIONS BROKEN BY PRESIDENT LAUGERUD IN MAY 1977 WHEN PANAMA SWITCHED TO THE BELIZEAN SIDE IN THE DISPUTE WITH GUATEMALA. IN FACT, IT IS WIDELY REPORTED IN GOG CIRCLES THAT GUATEMALAN AMBASSADOR HAS ALREADY BEEN DESIGNATED -- AIR FORCE COLONEL HECTOR ROSALES SALAVERRIA. THE ONLY CLOUD ON THE HORIZON, ONE WHICH THE PUBLICITY AND DELAY HAVE STIMULATED, IS THE VIEW GAINING STRENGTH IN NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS THAT SOMEHOW PANAMA SHOULD MEET THE GOG HALFWAY WITH A RECANTING GESTURE ON BELIZE.
BOSTER

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